

News Release



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State Parks Releases 'Public Use Vision' For Crystal Cove Historic District

CRYSTAL COVE – The California Department of Parks and Recreation today released the proposed public use vision document for the Crystal Cove Historic District, a beach-front park in Orange County that is being opened to full public and community use for the first time. The document is based on hundreds of public comments and community-generated proposals for the use of the historic district.

The vision is to preserve the unique historic nature of the beach park, while allowing for more public use by park visitors, school groups and others. The plan envisions expanding the scope and level of current community involvement in the park's interpretive, artistic and educational programs.

"State Parks is offering a comprehensive outline for the park in this new vision statement, and now we can begin soliciting public comment," State Parks Director Rusty Areias said today. "The vision statement is flexible yet detailed enough to permit meaningful public dialogue and allow future planning adjustments."

The cost of establishing the new park has not yet been determined. As the planning process continues, the Department of Parks and Recreation will be exploring a number of sources for funding, including general departmental funds, state funds earmarked for maintenance projects, future bond monies, private donors and revenue that will be generated by the park itself. The Department expects to secure adequate funding for the project as it is required.

Copies of the vision statement may be found on the State Parks website at www.parks.ca.gov, or by contacting the local State Parks office at (949) 494-3539. A public workshop on the vision statement is planned for this fall, with the date and location to be announced later. State Parks already has held a number of public forums on the subject of Crystal Cove, including a public workshop in April and a stakeholders meeting in July. A second series of stakeholders meetings also is being planned.

The "Public Use Vision for the Crystal Cove Historic District" was written after the Department solicited public comment and input from stakeholders about the future of the park once residential tenants

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were relocated. To develop the document, park planning staff considered about 300 public comments and 20 separate community-generated proposals for use of the historic cottages. No single proposal was found to be ideal but a complimentary mix of public uses emerged. The department believes the proposed programs best integrate public access, cultural and natural resource preservation and educational, recreational and operational benefits for the widest public.

The new public Crystal Cove community will consist of a creative and evolving interaction of volunteer docents and gardeners, beach goers, visiting teachers and researchers, students, overnight guests, youth groups, artists, rangers, interpreters, lifeguards, maintenance people and environmental educators.

State Parks has owned the historic district since 1979. Earlier this year State Parks Director Areias canceled plans from the previous administration to turn the area into an upscale resort because he was concerned that many Californians would be priced out of the park.

Under the Department's new vision for the Crystal Cove Historic District, average Californians will have an opportunity to enjoy a brief beach vacation in a restored historic cottage. Overnight accommodations could range from dormitory-style rooms that could rent for as little as \$20 a night, to larger, multi-bedroom cottages with deck views for about \$150 a night. At least three cottages are recommended to be made wheelchair accessible.

The proposal recommends that overnight stays be limited to a week at a time, and no more than 30 days a year, in order to allow more public access to the Historic District without expanding existing facilities.

The vision statement calls for a visitor center, a docent center and beach restroom facilities. Other cottages would be set aside as a house museum, an underwater park education facility and a multi-purpose classroom/meeting space for programs, activities and special events. The statement also calls for two or three cottages to be used for concession uses such as a beach store, snack bar or café, and an art gallery.

The Public Use Vision also includes a Crystal Cove community arts, research and environmental program that could promote education subjects such as painting, photography, writing, in-depth environmental education and natural history instruction.

Local and visiting teachers and students would be invited to publicly create and display their art, photography and writing. The arts programs would focus on subjects related to the historic district, including *plein air* landscapes and seascapes, local marine and terrestrial life, local Native American culture and local historical themes.

The Public Use Vision proposes educational programs to interpret the park's cultural, natural and recreational resources.

The proposed vision statement for the park is: "The purpose of the Crystal Cove Historic District is to renovate, preserve and manage the district's unique cultural, natural and recreational resources and

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to make these values available for the enjoyment and education of all.”

State Parks is committed to rehabilitating and preserving more than just the historic fabric of the buildings, according to the vision statement. It also wants to preserve the oral histories, artifacts, documents and photographs that personalize the history of Crystal Cove.

Under the proposal, care would be taken to maintain the “spirit of place” of Crystal Cove. This would include in part:

- Monitoring visitor programs to prevent degradation of the area’s tangible and intangible values as a refuge and retreat.
- Isolating potential conflicting uses by establishing use zones and separate circulation routes.
- Limiting the size of visiting groups.
- Keeping night lighting to a minimum.
- Emphasizing walking as the preferred mode of transportation within the district.

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